

**Maundy Thursday - April 9, 2020**  
**Our Savior Lutheran Church**  
*(during COVID-19 and virtual church)*

Text: Psalm 116 - I will lift the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord.

***“Calling on the Name of the Lord - No Matter What!”***

This, the title of my sermon...right now, “No Matter What!” seems to be the case. Jesus said to his disciples: “I earnestly desire to share Passover with you.” Of course, they did not yet know what this would be.

We DO know and yet on this intimate night we are apart. Put simply...I miss you all! The news is hard to watch as it replays with more numbers and more clear calls for separation. Hope is not always easy. But we do not give up Hope because Jesus continues to share his Body and Blood, the bread and wine even in our hearts. Hope is a promise that will never let you go! Therefore, we continue to rise up in God’s hands with the hope that: this too will be done. We pray for those known and those unknown who need comfort. Who need voice of loved ones. Those who are ill, recovering and those who will be placed in God’s hands. We pray as we see hope in those that continue to walk forward into hospitals and homes thinking of the peoples needed care.

Hope goes right along with faith and love. We will never be abandoned!

Tonight even though separate we focus upon God who hears our voices both day and night.

Affirmation: Psalm 116:1-2 “I love the Lord, because he has heard my voice and my supplications. Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live.”

We pray earnestly in a loving relationship that will not let us go...bring a shorter and better end to this Virus.

Because your son suffered for us upon the cross, we understand that: “We will sing on, when from death we are free” so says the Hymn - ‘What Wondrous Love Is This’. Yet and Even so, we pray that healing may come to those ill and strength to families who cannot “touch” their loved ones but from a distance.

Whatever people claim or don't claim in terms of faith...we are all your children...hold us all, embrace us all...for we can see that "embrace" by so many who have reached out to others in service and caring. We place all things in your care knowing Your steadfast love continues. Bring peace and strength as we face each day.

For me this is both a beautiful and almost unbearable services we share!

In the past we have had "First Communion" as young people begin their journey of deepening their love and commitment through the promise of the Body and Blood of Jesus.

In the past we have gathered to remember how Jesus wanting to earnestly share the Passover, turned the tables on his disciples and shared so much more..." this is my body, this is my blood," Jesus said.

I can smell the special baked bread that Leslie Leitner and others have made. I can reflect on the taste of wine that is so much more. Yet...what we are missing is our "togetherness." Our strength of "seeing" faith expressed in person. This will be again!

AND, God's promise in Christ is not lessened or diminished because we have to be "creative" in our connections with each other.

Jesus knew the psalms and even as Judas would leave to betray him...I can feel the confidence when Jesus prayed.

Confidence that is remembered Psalm 116:

"I love the Lord, because he has heard my voice and my supplication."

"Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live."

To call upon him. Did you know: There are 29 places in the Bible where Jesus is in prayer.

St. Paul reminds us to pray without ceasing...probably not literally possible...but does mean in all things bring it to God in prayer.

Near the end of Jesus' earthly ministry there was his prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane..."Father if this cup could but pass." But Your Will be done.

Near the beginning of his ministry, Jesus' disciples wanted him to teach them "how to pray"...which is where we share "The Lord's prayer."

"I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord." Psalm 116

I have told you many times that I grew up in the city of Joliet, Illinois.

My mother never seemed to worry about me “playing outside.” And when it was time to come in...I knew I had the: “3 Call rule!” She yelled...”Stephen!” Once I could ignore, twice I had better get moving and the third time, it was “Stephen David!” I had better be walking through the door! Not because she was worried about my health...but upset about my ears!

My best friend was Brian Johnson growing up. I don't know why...but we never used the doorbell or knocked?! I would simply stand at the front of the house and shout: “Briaan!” After once or twice...he either would come out or his mom would come to the door explaining his absence. She never seemed upset...Maybe because she knew AND we understood the connection.

Calling was done in confidence and relationship. The same with my mom!

Calling should also be done in confidence because God hears!

Psalm 116 Verse 2: “Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live.”

If we could truly be together in worship...I would say to you...

God hears you!

As we take the bread and wine...it is the promise of His love.

Psalm 116 Verse 5: “Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; our God is merciful.”

I don't know of anyone who gets through this life and has only prayers of thanksgiving...this included Jesus!

Yes, Coronavirus has taken center stage...But, in every life there are cries for help. There are cries of what happened! There are cries of feeling alone. And yes, cries for health and the ending of life.

Psalm 116 Verse 9-10: “I walk before the Lord in the land of the living. I kept my faith, even when I said, “I am greatly afflicted”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German theologian who, at the age of twenty-five, became a lecturer in systematic theology at the University of Berlin. In 1933, and with Hitler's rise to power, Bonhoeffer became a leading spokesman for the Confessing Church. A resistance

movement against the Nazis. He was arrested in 1943. He was linked to a failed attempt on Hitler's life and sent to Buchenwald. Then to Schonberg prison.

After leading a worship service on April 8, 1945, at Schonberg prison, he was taken away to be hanged the next day. His last words as he left were, "This is the end, but for me the beginning of life."

I know that is a stringent story...But it says...that through Jesus' Body and Blood...  
Not only does God hear...but we have His eternal promise.

Bonhoeffer wrote a hymn: "By Gracious Powers" ELW #626  
Verse 1. "By gracious powers so wonderfully sheltered, and confidently waiting come what may, We know that God is with us night and morning, and never fails to greet us each new day."

From our Gospel of John this evening...Jesus takes the role of a servant, bending to wash the disciples' feet. Peter, not realizing the love offered in service...resists.  
You shall never wash my feet!, he says.

Jesus says: "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." John 13:8

Having his feet washed gives Peter a part in Jesus' ongoing life.

These words are intriguing in light of what has been called an "epidemic of loneliness" in the United States. In which many people do not feel a "share" in the life of others. This was even BEFORE the virulent virus!

SO, now is the time. This is the place.

God hears your call.

Because of this special night we have life in Jesus.

So, NOW IS the time.

Call someone. Send a note to someone. Pray for people.

Use your computer to text or e-mail someone.

Maybe a thank you "note" saying...thanks for being YOU.

Psalm 116 Verse 12-14: "What shall I return to the Lord for all his bounty to me?  
I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord, I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people."

I watch people during this “crisis” clapping for “front line” people. I see children drawing pictures to put in windows to bolster people who walk by. Hearts cut out by young and old in the windows! I see Teddy Bears and Christmas lights to lift spirits, regardless of what faith or lack thereof.

I see extra food given to pantries. I see people baking bread and leaving it on their porch for those who are in want.

Baking bread...that brings me back...Jesus showed us “What Wondrous Love,” for our sins and re-connecting us to God’s love.

Now our vows are not obligations but irresistible love that can’t help but give back.

I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord. Thanks be to God.